



## As You Sow calls out McDonald's, Amazon, Wal-Mart, Target for polystyrene use

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### Dive Brief:

- **As You Sow**, a nonprofit shareholder advocacy organization, has asked McDonald's, Amazon, Target and Walmart to stop using polystyrene to package and ship their products.
- The group points to [a new report](#) from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation that recommends the replacement of polystyrene, expanded polystyrene and polyvinyl chloride in packaging due to their [lack of a "viable after-use."](#) This report was endorsed by 15 major brands, including [Unilever](#) and Dow Chemical.
- As You Sow also cited the International Agency for Research on Cancer's determination that styrene is a possible human carcinogen. [Styrene has not received a formal carcinogenic classification](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency.



### Dive Insight:

Phasing out the use of polystyrene has been a priority of **As You Sow's** for years. [Based on a 2011 shareholder resolution](#) they encouraged McDonald's to try a pilot program that eventually resulted in the company making a full switch to paper in 2013. Though the company has yet to do this outside of the U.S. and Dunkin' Donuts hasn't followed up on a similar promise. Resolutions have also been filed with Amazon and Target, which mainly use the material for shipping.

Despite ongoing efforts to make the recycling of polystyrene foam products more cost-efficient through [industry grants](#) and [advanced processing technology](#), many environmental advocates and local legislators want to limit its use. According to **As You Sow**, more than 100 cities or counties have implemented some type of ban or restriction on polystyrene foam packaging. [Legislation was recently introduced](#) that would make Maryland the first state to do this, following similar policies in Washington D.C., Seattle and [San Francisco](#).

As is the case with any packaging change, the question of what will replace it is key. When it comes to coffee cups, some of the paper versions aren't easily recyclable due to their plastic liners. Though ongoing efforts in the U.K., [including a large new pilot program in London](#), have shown

that solutions are available when the material is separated properly. For e-commerce shipping needs, both Dell and Ikea have turned to [a form of packaging made from mushrooms](#).